

Heroines of the Qing: Exemplary Women Tell Their Stories. By BINBIN YANG. Seattle: UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS, 2016. Pp. xii + 230. \$50.

Over the centuries Chinese historians have collected countless biographies of exemplary women that celebrate the lives of moral paragons. We read of women who resist jealousy of their harem mates, wives who make heroic sacrifices of comfort, health, and life itself for the lineages of their husbands, while others commit acts of self-harm to protect chastity or remain faithful to young men who die before the unfortunate brides even lay eyes on them. When confronting these largely male-authored accounts, we can't help but wonder how the exemplars themselves might have portrayed their own lives. Finally, with Binbin Yang's brilliant and path-breaking book, which utilizes a large and diverse array of literary and artistic genres, we hear from the female exemplars themselves.

Chapter one, "Breaking the Silence: Cases of Outspoken Exemplary Women," focuses on women whose collected writings utilize the anger, frustration, and bitterness of fulfilling their roles as wives, daughters, and mothers as a powerful means to establish themselves as exemplars. For example, in an autobiographical poem addressed to her son, Xie Xiangtang (1800?-1870?) writes: "Ever since I married your father, I have abandoned my brushes and ink stone. / Your father was a profligate, who was too lazy to deal with household matters . . . / Gradually debts piled up, / To pay for which we sold off our fine properties. / I made all efforts to give him my counsel, / And led him to abandon his former path" (p. 26). Xie's detailed account of her husband's squandering family resources on brothels and the resulting suffering imposed on the family is key to the establishment of her own exemplary status. Yang points out that literary accounts of a woman's ability to endure hardship in order to sustain her husband's patriline was not merely for the sake of self-expression but formed the basis of documentation that might lead to a court reward and a woman's inclusion in "Biographies of Martyred Women." Still, as Yang points out, "To the extent that their self-promotion problematized the authority of their husbands, these women called into question the patriarchal values of the family system that were integral to their very existence as moral exemplars" (p. 38). The accounts included in this chapter are deeply moving and stunning in their frankness. But one wonders how unique these voices of bitterness and complaint are in the entire corpus of women's autobiography.

In chapter two, "Visualizing Exemplarity: Women's Portraits and Paintings for Self-Representation," Yang examines the role of women's painting in autobiographical projects. In the Chinese tradition, almost from the start, illustrations accompanied the biographies of female exemplars. What sets these examples apart is the use of a woman's own paintings to illustrate, dra-

matize, and circulate her exemplary status on her own terms. A striking example is that of Chen Yunlian, who used her illustrated poetic sequence both to document her devoted service to her husband's lineage in spite of her husband's abusive behavior and as a means to vindicate herself among elite peers. In addition, Yang shows how several women painters who had fallen on hard times used painting not only to support themselves but also to build networks for their own social advancement and for the recognition and promotion of their husbands and sons. The messages of these illustrated texts were further amplified by inscriptions from the pens of local, often male, elites that became incorporated into a printed or personal collection. Painting was a means for women to reach beyond the inner quarters and make contact with influential men who might help them gain recognition, prestige, or financial support.

Chapter three, "Staging Family Drama: Genealogical Writing as Ritual Authority," traces an inheritance dispute through the genealogical writings that a woman named Yuan Jingrong composed for the lineage of her husband. Given the patriarchal focus of genealogical writing, women were generally barred from such projects and therefore from the ritual and, to a certain extent, the legal authority that such writings conferred on their authors and their constructions of family history. This chapter highlights the dynamics of the patriarchal family in the liminal period surrounding the death of a family head and the strategies used by Yuan to challenge the dispensation of the estate, based upon her self-representation as a model wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. As Yang notes, part of Yuan's authority derived from the fact that her marriage was uxorilocal. Still, her case shows how establishing a reputation of female exemplarity allowed women to make claims in arenas that did not normally allow for the vocal input of women, empowering them to fight for a cause that might otherwise be deemed self-serving.

The heroines described in chapter four, "Enacting Guardians of Family Health: From Exemplary Wife to Reformer," do not exhibit the contentiousness that distinguishes the women studied in the first three chapters. They nevertheless represent the growing participation of literate women in the male-dominated world of medicine by dint of the boom in commercially printed medical literature. Yang also shows how in late Qing times a woman's duty to guard family health became more than an aspect of female virtue, as it became an integral part of the call for modernization and nation building, and one that ideally would include all women and not simply the women of gentry households.

In sum, Yang's book provides important insights into the discourse of female exemplarity in late imperial China as a dynamic process driven by the active intervention of women. "Discussions of feminism in China around the turn of the twentieth century," she writes, "should therefore be informed by . . . women's

self-construction in relation to normative values instead of being construed as a radical break from these normative values or presuming [that] . . . women's efforts at self-empowerment became meaningful only when they eventually conformed to standards of feminism proper" (p. 157). The book is full of information that will appeal to lay readers and surprise and delight specialists.

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Südarabien im Altertum: Kommentierte Bibliographie der Jahre 1997 bis 2011. By WALTER W. MÜLLER. Epigraphische Forschungen auf der Arabischen Halbinsel, vol. 6. Tübingen: WASMUTH, 2014. Pp. vii + 187. €19.80.

The author of this volume, W. W. Müller, is known for his penetrating and sober method as well as his open and helpful demeanor, which his colleagues would confirm. For all of his eighty-four years, Müller remains incredibly active, a veritable volcano of friendly non-partisan helpfulness. In this bibliography he includes the contributions of all countries. It is appropriate that he should contribute an important and selfless service work for all in the series *Epigraphische Forschungen auf der Arabischen Halbinsel* under the aegis of Norbert Nebes (Jena and Berlin). Until 2015 Müller's bibliography was ably assisted for secretarial tasks by Rosemarie Richter, who has unfortunately now retired.

Peter Blank (Jena) has converted Müller's commented bibliography from successive volumes of the *Archiv für Orientforschung* into its monographic form, thus giving the user a readily accessible overview for publications from 1997 to 2011 without the necessity of looking into different journal volumes. No single library has such a wide range of books on Old South Arabian studies, many of which easily might go unnoticed. After the bibliographical data, each of the publication entries is briefly described in a neutral language, in German. This requires Romanizing many of the titles in a consistent way.

This volume continues Müller's bibliography for the years 1974 to 1996. While the first book contains 1415 commented bibliographical entries, its worthy successor has 999. However, the two volumes differ in impor-

tant ways. The first covers twenty-three years and the other fourteen, an indication of the dramatic growth of Arabian studies. In recent years, given the expansion of archaeological and epigraphic studies—the mainstays of this volume—not all of the former have been or could be entered. The author and editor both point out in the foreword that they have presented here a select bibliography, but there is no qualifying change in the book title such as "*vorwiegend Epigraphik*" (predominantly epigraphy). The summaries of the publications are longer in the volume under discussion. The amount of potential literature is enormous, since it theoretically also includes Arabic language topics and publications in Arab countries.

As mentioned, up to the publication date 2007, the titles were listed annually in the *Archiv für Orientforschung*, most recently in volume 51 (2011). The bibliography of the succeeding years appears for the first time in the volume under discussion. Readers new to our field can quickly orient themselves, since the bibliography appears in full form and without obscure abbreviations. This overview should help to hinder the proliferation of repetitive non-original articles.

Müller has ordered the works alphabetically by author, as in the preceding work, and then by year. The inscriptions are also ordered alphabetically by their abbreviation (*Inschriftensigel*), but not as previously with a register of Old South Arabian words and morphemes, those from other Semitic languages, or by find-spot. The orthography throughout is unified in Semitic and ancient Western languages, quite a useful task in itself.

This work belongs in every library devoted to Arabia and its ancient language. The range of works is extremely broad and includes rare books, e.g., the short-run *Festschrift* for Yusuf Abdullah and Alessandro de Maigret and Christian Robin's book of 2005, which was finally printed in 2009. Its low price makes it available even to students. Many read little further nowadays than the *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* and *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, which Müller's bibliography far exceeds.

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